Claims

1. A method for automatic production of documentation for configurable computerized systems, comprising the steps of:

   a) retrieving configuration parameters having values associated therewith, from a configurable system into a computer;

   b) outputting explanatory text segments corresponding with at least one of said configuration parameters and the value associated with said parameter, to form a document or a portion thereof.

2. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of automatically selecting said explanatory text segments by said computer, in accordance with said configuration parameters.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein said step of retrieving is performed using a collector computer program operating on a first computer, and collecting said configuration parameters from said configurable system, wherein said step of selecting is performed by a second computer.

4. The method of claim 3 further comprises the step of transferring said configuration parameters from said first computer to said second computer via the Internet.

5. The method of claim 3 further comprising the step of downloading said collector program onto said first computer.

6. The method of claim 5 further comprising the step of automatically activating said collector program after said step of downloading.

7. The method of claim 5 further comprising the step of initiating said step of downloading from within a World Wide Web Browser.

8. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of constructing a table of contents for said document.

9. The method of claim 8 wherein said configurable system is at least one selected from a group consisting of a configurable software application, a computer

operating system, an electronic messaging system, a database management system, an enterprise resource planing system, a mass storage platform, file server system, a network router, and a network switching device.

10. The method of claim 8 wherein said configurable system is selected from a group consisting of a Lotus Notes system, Novel Groupwise system, Microsoft Windows NT server, Microsoft Windows NT domain, Microsoft Windows 2000 system, Microsoft Windows 2000 domain, Unix operating system, Linux operating system, Sun Solaris operating system, EMC^2 mass storage system, a Baan enterprise management system, a Peoplesoft enterprise management system, an Oracle database management system, and a Microsoft SQL Server database management system.

11. The method of claim 8 wherein said configurable system is a SAP enterprise management system.

12. The method of claim 8 wherein said configurable system is a Microsoft Exchange messaging system.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein said configurable system is at least one selected from a group consisting of a configurable software application, a computer operating system, an electronic messaging system, a database management system, a mass storage platform, file server system, a network router, and a network switching device.

14. The method of claim 1 wherein said configurable system is at least one selected from a group consisting of a Microsoft Exchange organization, Lotus Notes system, Novel Groupwise system, Microsoft Windows NT server, Microsoft Windows NT domain, Microsoft Windows 2000 system, Microsoft Windows 2000 domain, Unix operating system, Linux operating system, Sun Solaris operating system, EMC^2 mass storage system, a Baan enterprise management system, a Peoplesoft enterprise management system, an Oracle database management system, and a Microsoft SQL Server database management system.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein said configurable system is a SAP enterprise management system.

16. The method of claim 1 wherein said configurable system is a Microsoft Exchange messaging system.

17. The method of claim 1 wherein at least two of said explanatory text segments are being grouped in accordance with interrelationship of their corresponding parameters.

18. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of generating an index of selected parameters and paragraphs detailing relative location of said parameters and paragraphs within said document.

19. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

a) providing a computer readable set of rules, at least one of said rules having a range of acceptable values associated with one or more configuration parameters for said configurable system; and,

b) comparing said retrieved configuration parameters against said set of rules.

20. The method of claim 19 further comprising the step of outputting an indication of error conditions if at least one of said configuration parameters violates one or more of said rules.

21. The method of claim 19 wherein at least one of said rules also comprise indications of desired values for said associated parameter, and further comprising the step of outputting information conveying said desired values.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein said desired values are computably modifiable.

23. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of retrieving is preformed using a collector computer program that collects said configuration parameters from said configurable system.

24. The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of activating said collector computer program from within a World Wide Web browser.

25. The method of claim 23 wherein said collector program is an ActiveX program.

26. The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of constructing said collector program using the Java programming language.

27. The method of claim 1 wherein said explanatory text is arranged in a text template having placeholders embedded therein and further comprising the step of merging the values associated with said configuration variables with the template in accordance with said placeholders.

28. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of outputting further comprises embedding one or more drawings within said document.

29. The method for claim 1 further comprising the step of storing said retrieved configuration parameters in a database adapted to store one or more sets of configuration variables, and retrieve portions of one or more said sets in response to queries.

30. The method of claim ~~30~~ 29 further comprising the step of embedding results of queries within said document.

31. The method of claim 1 further comprising the steps of:

a) storing a first set of configuration parameters from a configurable system;

b) storing a second set of configuration parameters from a configurable system; and,

c) outputting differences between said first and second sets of configuration. Parameters.

32. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of outputting said documentation in a format compatible with a format selected from the group consisting of HTML, Postscript, Latex, PCL, Microsoft Word, and Adobe Acrobat.

33. The method of claim 1 wherein said computer is integrated into said configurable system.

34. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of outputting is being performed by a software module integrated into said configurable system.

35. The method of claim 2 wherein said step of selecting is being performed by a software module integrated into said configurable system.

36. A system for automatic production of documentation for configurable computerized systems, comprising:

a) a first computer having data communication capability;

b) means for retrieving configuration parameters from a configurable system and communicating said parameters into said first computer;

c) means for generating explanatory documentation specific for said configurable system in accordance with said configuration parameters; and,

d) means for outputting said documentation.

37. The system of claim 36 wherein said means for retrieving comprises a computer program executed on a second computer coupled to said configurable system and wherein said first computer is in communication with said second computer via a data network.

38. The system of claim 36 wherein said communication is conducted by means of the Internet.

39. A system for automatic production of documentation for configurable computerized systems, comprising:

a) a collector computer program adapted to retrieve configuration parameters from at least one configurable system;

b) a documentation generator program, comprising:

i. a text template having place holders indicating placement of one or more configuration parameters;

ii. a data parser in communication with said collector program, said parser adapted to parse said configuration parameters into associated values and merge said values into said template; and,

iii. an output module adapted to output said text template with said merged values to form a document or a portion thereof.

40. The system of claim 39 further comprising a set of acceptable values for at least one of said configuration parameters and wherein an error condition indication is outputted if the value of a configuration parameter violates said acceptable values.

41. The system of claim 39 further comprising a database and a database management system for storing said configuration parameters, and wherein said database management system is adapted to respond to queries and output a portional view of said configuration parameters for output into said document.

42. The system of claim 39 further adapted to store at least a first and a second set of said configuration parameters and to output parameters having value difference between said first and second set.

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43. A method for automated production of documentation for configurable computerized system, comprising the steps of:

a) Downloading a collector computer program to a first computer which is in communication with a configurable system;

b) collecting configuration parameters from a configurable system using said collector program;

c) transmitting said configuration parameters into a second computer having a documentation generator program operable thereon;

d) outputting a document having explanatory text and said configuration parameters embedded therein by means of said documentation generator, wherein said document is characterized by having said explanatory text being proximal to correlated configuration parameters, and by having a table of contents detailing relative location of certain segments of said explanatory text.

44. The method of claim 43 further comprising the steps of
storing a first and a second set of configuration parameters; and,
comparing said first set and second set and outputting differences therebetween.

45. The method of claim 43 wherein said configurable system is at least one selected from a group consisting of a configurable software application, a computer operating system, an electronic messaging system, a database management system, an enterprise resource planing system, a mass storage platform, file server system, a network router, and a network switching device.

46. The method of claim 43 wherein said configurable system is a SAP enterprise management system.

47. The method of claim 43 wherein said configurable system is a Microsoft Exchange messaging system.

48. The method of claim 43 further comprising the step of outputting said documentation in a format compatible with a format selected from the group consisting of HTML, Postscript, Latex, PCL, Microsoft Word, and Adobe Acrobat.

49. A method for automatic production of documentation for configurable computerized systems, comprising the steps of:

a) coupling a computer with at least a portion of a configurable system via an Intranet;

b) retrieving configuration parameters having values associated therewith, from a configurable system into said computer;

c) outputting explanatory text segments corresponding with at least one of said configuration parameters and the value associated with said parameter, to form a document or a portion thereof.

50. The method of claim 49 further comprising the step of automatically selecting said explanatory text segments by said computer, in accordance with said configuration parameters.

51. The method of claim 49 wherein said step of retrieving is performed using a collector computer program coupled to said configurable system.

52. The method of claim 49 further comprising the step of constructing said collector program as an ActiveX® program.

53. The method of claim 49 further comprising the step of constructing said collector program using the Java® programming language.

54. The method of claim 49 further comprising the step of automatically retrieving said configuration parameters in accordance with a predetermined schedule.

55. The method of claim 49 further comprising the step of constructing a table of contents for said document.

56. The method of claim 55 wherein said computer is coupled via an Intranet to at least one configurable system selected from a group consisting of a configurable software application, a computer operating system, an electronic messaging system, a database management system, an enterprise resource planing system, a mass storage platform, file server system, a network router, and a network switching device..

57. The method of claim 55 wherein said configurable system is at least one selected from a group consisting of Lotus Notes system, Novel Groupwise system, Microsoft Windows NT server, Microsoft Windows NT domain, Microsoft Windows 2000 system, Microsoft Windows 2000 domain, Unix operating system, Linux operating system, Sun Solaris operating system, EMC^2 mass storage system, a Baan enterprise management system, a Peoplesoft enterprise management system, an Oracle database management system, and a Microsoft SQL Server database management system.

58. The method of claim 49 wherein said computer is adapted to produce documentation for a plurality of configurable systems.

59. The method of claim 49 further comprising the step of maintaining an activity log detailing operations of said steps of retrieving and outputting.

60. The method of claim 55 further comprising the step of outputting said documentation in at least one format compatible with a format selected from the

group consisting of HTML, Postscript, Latex, PCL, Microsoft Word, and Adobe Acrobat.

61. The method of claim 49 wherein said configurable system is at least one selected from a group consisting of a configurable software application, a computer operating system, an electronic messaging system, a database management system, a mass storage platform, file server system, a network router, and a network switching device.

62. The method of claim 49 wherein said configurable system is at least one selected from a group consisting of a Microsoft Exchange organization, Lotus Notes system, Novell GroupWise system, Microsoft Windows NT server, Microsoft Windows NT domain, Microsoft Windows 2000 system, Microsoft Windows 2000 domain, Unix operating system, Linux operating system, Sun Solaris operating system, EMC^2 mass storage system, a Baan enterprise management system, a Peoplesoft enterprise management system, an Oracle database management system, and a Microsoft SQL Server database management system.

63. The method of claim 49 wherein said configurable system is a SAP enterprise management system.

64. The method of claim 49 wherein said configurable system is a Microsoft Exchange messaging system.

65. The method of claim 49 further comprising the step of outputting said documentation in at least one format compatible with a format selected from the group consisting of HTML, Postscript, Latex, PCL, Microsoft Word, and Adobe Acrobat.

66. The method of claim 49 wherein at least two of said explanatory text segments are being grouped in accordance with interrelationship of their corresponding parameters.

67. The method of claim 49 further comprising the step of generating an index of selected parameters and paragraphs detailing relative location of said parameters and paragraphs within said document.

68. The method of claim 49 further comprising the steps of:

c) providing a computer readable set of rules, at least one of said rules having a range of acceptable values associated with one or more configuration parameters for said configurable system; and,

d) comparing said retrieved configuration parameters against said set of rules.

69. The method of claim 68 further comprising the step of outputting an indication of error conditions if at least one of said configuration parameters violates one or more of said rules.

70. The method of claim 68 wherein at least one of said rules also comprise indications of desired values for said associated parameter, and further comprising the step of outputting information conveying said desired values.

71. The method of claim 70 wherein said desired values are computably modifiable.

sub C14 72. The method of claim 49 wherein said explanatory text is arranged in a text template having placeholders embedded therein and further comprising the step of merging the values associated with said configuration variables with the template in accordance with said placeholders.

73. The method of claim 49 wherein said step of outputting further comprises the step of embedding one or more drawings within said document.

74. The method of claim 49 further comprising the step of communicating said document to another computer by means of a World Wide Web server.

75. The method for claim 49 further comprising the step of storing said retrieved configuration parameters in a database adapted to store one or more sets of configuration variables, and retrieve portions of one or more said sets in response to queries.

76. The method of claim 75 further comprising the step of embedding results of queries within said document.

77. The method of claim 49 further comprising the steps of:

a) storing a first set of configuration parameters from a configurable system;

b) storing a second set of configuration parameters from a configurable system; and,

c) outputting differences between said first and second sets of configuration parameters.

78. A system for automatic production of documentation for configurable computerized systems, comprising:

a) a computer adapted to be coupled to a configurable system via an Intranet;

b) means for retrieving configuration parameters from said configurable system into said computer;

c) means for generating explanatory documentation specific for said configurable system in accordance with said configuration parameters; and,

d) means for outputting said documentation.

79. The system of claim 78 wherein said means for retrieving comprises a computer program executed on a second computer coupled to said configurable system and wherein said first computer is in communication with said second computer via an Intranet.

80. A system for automatic production of documentation for configurable computerized systems, comprising:

a) a computer coupled to said configurable system via an Intranet;

b) a collector program operated on said computer and adapted to retrieve configuration parameters from at least one configurable system;

c) a documentation generator program, comprising:

i. a text template having place holders indicating placement of one or more configuration parameters;

ii. a data parser in communication with said collector program, said parser adapted to parse said configuration parameters into associated values and merge said values into said template; and,

iii. an output module adapted to output said text template with said merged values to form a document or a portion thereof.

81. The system of claim 80 further comprising a set of acceptable values for at least one of said configuration parameters and wherein an error condition indication is outputted if the value of a configuration parameter violates said acceptable values.

82. The system of claim 80 further comprising a database and a database management system for storing said configuration parameters, and wherein said database management system is adapted to respond to queries and output a portional view of said configuration parameters for output into said document.

83. The system of claim 80 further adapted to store at least a first and a second set of said configuration parameters and to output parameters having value difference between said first and second set.

84. The system of claim 80 further comprising a World Wide Web server adapted to communicate said documentation to another computer.

85. The method of claim 80 further comprising the step of outputting said documentation in at least one format compatible with a format selected from the group consisting of HTML, Postscript, Latex, PCL, Microsoft Word, and Adobe Acrobat.

86. A method for automated production of documentation for configurable computerized system, comprising the steps of:

a) retrieving configuration parameters from a configurable system, a into a computer that is in communication with said configurable system via an Intranet;

b) selecting explanatory text segments in accordance with said configuration parameters;

c) outputting a document having said text segments and values associated with said configuration parameters embedded therein, wherein said document is characterized by having said explanatory text being proximal to correlated

configuration parameters, and by having a table of contents detailing relative location of certain segments of said explanatory text.

87. The method of claim 86 further comprising the steps of
storing a first and a second set of configuration parameters; and,
comparing said first set and second set and outputting differences therebetween.

88. The method of claim 86 wherein said configurable system is selected from a group consisting of a configurable software application, a computer operating system, an electronic messaging system, a database management system, an enterprise resource planing system, a mass storage platform, file server system, a network router, a network switching device, or a combination thereof.

89. The system of claim 86 further comprising a World Wide Web server adapted to communicate said documentation to another computer.

90. The method of claim 86 further comprising the step of outputting said documentation in at least one format compatible with a format selected from the group consisting of HTML, Postscript, Latex, PCL, Microsoft Word, and Adobe Acrobat.